The Price of Imagination

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The Price of Imagination

by Hangsaman

Summary

Will falls in love with Hannibal at their first meeting.
He just doesn't know that Hannibal has also fallen in love with him.
Both of them try to go about each other acting normal but the attraction is apparent.

Notes

This is my first fic so please don't roast me (or do).
I have written multiple chapters so stay tuned for a slow burn (things will get steamy).
Enjoy! xoxo

Chapter 1

Chapter Summary

> Will wakes up from a nightmare. Unable to fall asleep, he recalls his first meeting with Hannibal and suppresses the fact that he has fallen for Hannibal.
> He then calls Hannibal because Hannibal had offered to help with the nightmares.

See? A voice whispered.

Will Graham woke up with a start, as he did most nights now: suddenly, and with panic.

He ran a hand over his face and glanced at the clock: 2 am. He shivered, yet his skin was gleaming with sweat. His first instinct during these "episodes" was to take off his soaked T-shirt, throw on some fresh clothes and try to go back to sleep. But this time, something was different. This time, he stayed put and thought about something someone had said to him a few days ago. Something that scared him. He had brushed off the remark, thinking never, but here he was, considering. Funny how certain things took hold of you, and appeared in your mind even on the most distressing of situations. His eyes shifted slowly to his phone on his bed-side table; he shifted as if to keep distance from it: to stop himself from leaning on someone…to stop himself from asking for help.

"No, I can't…" he murmured, waking one of the dogs, Ellie, who looked up at Will as if in worry.

"Go back to sleep," Will whispered, feigning being fine to a dog. Pretending to be fine, yet again. But he was not fine, and he knew it.

He closed his eyes but it was undeniable: he couldn't stop thinking about it now. Thinking about…

Might as well not go to sleep. Or, might as well…

He reached out and took hold of his phone, scrolling though his contacts. And there it was, recently added: Dr. Hannibal Lecter. Will's thumb hovered uncertainly over it. Will thought back to his first meeting with Dr. Lecter. That day, Jack had surprisingly arranged a meeting with Will instead of suddenly pulling him out of a lecture, as he did normally. And when he arrived—disheveled and sluggish—he learned the reason why. Will walked in on Jack talking with a stranger, his face obscured as he sat opposite Jack. Their conversation seemed lively, as if they were respectful but also familiar with each other. Will could tell the stranger wasn't from around here: he looked out of place, but not painfully so. Something about was just… different. Something he couldn't completely describe.

Jack had noticed Will, and continued to introduce them. “I’d like you to meet Dr. Hannibal Lecter,”

The stranger had stood up and offered a hand, with a smile but not quite. As if he was weighing whether to decide if he would get along with Will just by looking at him. Will extended his hand. He wasn’t nervous, and frankly he was in a hurry to get it over with so he could at least grab something to eat before another lecture. Jack continued: “He’s helping us with psychological profiling. Dr. Lecter was referred to me by Dr. Bloom.”

Will murmured a reply, already annoyed with formalities. He sat himself down and began flipping through documents, tired but intent.

After polite back-and-forth Dr. Lecter spoke: “Not fond of eye contact are you?” Will knew it was something people were too afraid to point out, but Dr. Lecter was vaguely smiling when he made his observation. Will didn’t feel annoyed, but he didn’t feel comfortable with it either. He was puzzled: that was more closer to the truth. Will replied accordingly: “Eyes are distracting. You see too much. You don’t see enough. And it’s hard to focus when you’re thinking those whites are really white or they must have hepatitis, or is that a burst vein? So I try to avoid eyes whenever possible.” Dr. Lecter smiled, his eyes lingering all over Will’s face. As if in a panic, Will went back to his papers.

And then Dr. Lecter had crossed a line: “I imagine what you see and learn touches everything else in your mind. Your values and decency are present yet shocked at your associations, appalled at your dreams. No forts in the bone arena of your skull for things you love.” It felt intrusive, and too close to the truth. A jab where it hurt the most. So Will had snapped at Dr. Lecter that he didn’t want to be psycho-analysed, and then stormed out of Jack’s office.

Only later when he had cooled off had he realised that what he had said might have been rude; he also wondered why he had been so defensive to a person he had only just met. Of course, Dr. Lecter was a stranger who had burrowed into Will’s mind without permission. But he was a psychiatrist. That’s what they did.

But instead of Dr. Lecter holding a grudge against Will and keeping a distance, it had seemed to draw Dr. Lecter towards him even more. After the unfortunate event that had resulted with Garret Jacob Hobbs’ death, Jack Crawford had ordered a psych-eval, and Dr. Lecter had happily declared Will sane, but he wondered why Dr. Lecter had done that. Was it so he could continue to keep seeing Will at crime scenes and whatnot?

And then recently Will had realised something frightening about himself when he thought of Dr. Lecter. He had a feeling that he was being observed, and that he had found out that he liked being observed by Dr. Lecter.

After Hobbs’ death, they had met a few times at crime scenes, as Jack seemed to be fond of Dr. Lecter’s opinion as much as he was fond of using Will. And then Dr. Lecter had convinced Will to start therapy with him, once a week. So far he had only gone once and it had been the most unsettling conversation of his life. He had given brief answers to Dr. Lecter’s burrowing questions until they ended up talking about an on-going investigation.

Will felt like he was being lured, but he had no idea what was at the end of the line. Dr. Lecter made him feel confused. That much he was sure of.

"Fuck it," he said, dialled and waited, hoping that Dr. Lecter wouldn't pick up; but also, deep down in his heart, hoping that he might.

And just as he was about to hang up, there it was: the raspy, sleep-laden voice. "Hello, Will."

No sign of annoyance, or even surprise. Almost as if Dr. Lecter had been expecting Will to call. Will felt his throat tighten, suddenly unable to speak now that he had what he wanted. But what was it that he wanted? Was it Dr. Lecter's voice, saying his name, or something else entirely?

Suddenly, he didn't like what he was feeling.

"Will, are you there?" A hint of worry. He didn't know that he had the power to worry the mighty Dr. Lecter.

"Yes," he answered, his own voice scratchy with dehydration. "Yes, I'm here."

A long second of silence passed, as if on the other end Dr. Lecter was trying to assess if something was wrong, which was tricky because something was always wrong with Will.

"Will, tell me what's wrong. Are you hurt?"

Am I hurt? Will thought. What's wrong? *Everything.*

"I…" he began, but the words didn't come.

Will heard a rustling, as if Dr. Lecter had flung over his bed sheets and gotten out of bed. "Will, I need to know if you're in any immediate danger." Dr. Lecter asked, almost urgently. Had Will let escape something in his voice that indicated danger? The only thing dangerous in their presence was Dr. Lecter himself, Will thought.

"Oh, no, Dr. Lecter…I called because…" he trailed off, suddenly ashamed. Then: "You know what, this is a mistake. I apologise for waking you up—"

"—I meant what I said," came the interrupting reply, somewhat coldly. "You called because I suggested that you do." So matter-of-fact. How was this so easy for him, while Will was on the verge of a panic attack? If he wanted to confide in Dr. Lecter, why was he so scared?

"Try not to dwell on the fact that you called me, or the discomfort you know will arise after we have hung up. Don't think, just listen to my voice, and concentrate."

Will was astonished at how willing he was to obey the orders. He realised that he did think too much. How exhausting it all was, to be thinking all the time: about what he was doing, why he was doing them…what he should be doing.

"Okay," he nodded, as if Dr. Lecter was in the room with him.

“Lay back, and take a deep breath with me. Close your eyes, Will.”

He did as he was told, the darkness of his lids momentarily subduing the noises in his head. His body finally giving in to the melodic drone of Dr. Lecter’s voice. He felt himself relaxing, finally letting go of the tension. He breathed in and out as Dr. Lecter counted and gave instructions, several minutes passing in this way until even the banging in his head quietened to a dull throb. He didn’t know Dr. Lecter could do such a thing, and chuckled silently. Of course he could do such a thing. He was a psychiatrist after all.

“Now, Will. How are you feeling?” came the voice quietly, as if Will was on the verge of slipping into blissful sleep, which, surprisingly, he was.

“Like…I can breathe again…” he replied.

“Good,” said Dr. Lecter. Will realised their phone call was coming to an end, and almost panicked that it was over so soon. Why did he want Dr. Lecter to keep talking, to keep caressing him into sleep? He imagined himself being lowered to bed in Dr. Lecter’s arms, and felt his cheeks becoming warm. What was he doing? What had he been expecting from this phone-call? Perhaps he had expected something entirely different, like Dr. Lecter forcing him to re-live his nightmare, to talk about it in detail. To act completely professional and cold. Instead, he was faced with something a little more vague, a cross between friend and colleague and psychiatrist. And something else too…

“Dr. Lecter,” he spoke, almost in a whisper because it was getting hard to speak, now that he was so close to getting back to sleep. And then he realised he didn’t know what he was going to say, except that he wanted to keep hearing the voice on the other end.

“Yes, Will. I’m here.” came the reply. So patient. Why did Dr. Lecter even tolerate him?

“I…want to thank you for this…” he began, not knowing where else to go.

But Dr. Lecter was quicker: “Thank me by joining me for dinner tomorrow. I’ll call you again in the morning in case you forget,”

“Doctor, I-” Will began, but he found that he liked that idea. It was an excuse to see Dr. Lecter sooner.

“Good night, Will. I hope you’ll have a sound sleep,”

“Good night Dr. Lecter.” he replied, obediently.

“And Will?”

“Yes, Doctor?”

“Hannibal, call me Hannibal, Will.”

Chapter 2

Chapter Summary

> Will visits Hannibal for dinner and ends up having to confront some real feelings about Hannibal.

The next day Will woke to his dogs yipping and licking his face, begging to be let out. The sun was blindingly bright, so much so that it must've been close to noon. He found his phone plastered to the side of his face, bringing back memories of what had happened during the night. Was it possible that he had dreamed the entire thing? Cursing, he jumped out of bed and let the dogs out.

After a quick, scalding shower, he started busying himself with breakfast (the dogs first, then himself). Just as he was settling himself down with a cup of coffee, he heard his phone ring, and almost automatically, his heart started beating faster. It might be Jack Crawford, but it might also be Dr. Lecter. Or, as he had been given permission to, Hannibal. How strange and foreign the name sounded in his mouth. He considered ignoring the call and letting it ring, but curiosity gave in.

"Hello?" he answered.

"Good afternoon, Will," It was Hannibal. Will felt his knees wobble.

"Good afternoon…Hannibal," he replied, again growing nervous. If Hannibal had the power to make him go to sleep, he also had the power to do the exact opposite.

"How was your sleep?"

"Remarkably nightmare-less…thanks to you," Will realised then that he felt guilty of admitting that: he was giving someone else the knowledge that they could be good for him.

"Then I will see you for dinner. I was thinking 7 pm?"

"Yes, I'll be there."

"Good." The line went dead. Will exhaled dramatically, suddenly finding himself out of breath. He hoped Hannibal wasn't going to go out of his way to prepare something lavish, but he knew hoping was practically useless. He recalled the time Hannibal had brought him breakfast at the motel in Duluth the day Will had killed Garret Jacob Hobbs: how luxurious a simple scrambled egg could be, how the sausage had seemed to reveal layers after layers of taste. Guiltily, an intrusive thought flickered through his mind: he imagined being married to Hannibal, and being blessed with such meals; Hannibal bringing him a dramatic breakfast in

bed; Will tasting the hand-made bread, the coffee brewed by Hannibal's beautiful hands, all while Hannibal watched.

"This is getting out of hand," Will said to Winston (the new member of the family), who seemed to be settling in quite well.

Will sat in his car, gripping a wine bottle, preparing himself to see Hannibal; to be seen by Hannibal. He had bought the wine just in case, but realised that the gesture might be a little too romantic. For a lot of reasons, he didn't want Hannibal to know about the things that he was feeling about Hannibal. At least, not for now. He wondered what was Hannibal's idea of romance. What could Will do that would betray the feelings he was having for Hannibal now? Perhaps it was better to do nothing, if Will wanted to go undetected. And did Hannibal even *like* men? It was impossible to imagine him with anyone, but also impossible to imagine that he couldn't easily sway both men and women.

He wondered if Hannibal could see him contemplating in his car, and set the wine aside. It was too dangerous, too much of a thing unlike himself. Besides, Hannibal's cellar was probably stocked with bottles that Will could only ever dream of tasting. He took one last deep breath and bolted out of the car.

Will rang the bell and tried to compose his face. When Hannibal opened the door, a welcoming aroma of meat stewing crept out with him, momentarily disarming Will, and making him forget about his nervousness. "Will," Hannibal said, looking pleased. Hearing his name said out loud by Hannibal never seemed to lose its effect. It sent a jolt through Will; but also a sad feeling that someday Hannibal might stop saying it. Taking great care to seem unfazed, he straightened himself and answered the greeting: "Hannibal." He looked at Hannibal not knowing how he would react, but Hannibal only looked at Will deeply, as if they had finally stepped into new territory, and that this new territory was the right direction.

"Come in, Will." said Hannibal, closing the door and heading to the kitchen. "I'm almost ready to serve. Will you be so kind as to open the wine?"

Once Will had dutifully opened the wine and poured it into its pitcher (the only thing that he was allowed to do), he was instructed to be seated, as Hannibal busied himself with final touches. Will looked around at the dining room, and wondered if there would ever come a day when he would get used to this place; its unfamiliar beauty, the meticulous details. Or, simply, if he would ever get used to being around Hannibal.

Hannibal entered with hands full, something audibly bubbling and deliciously steaming.

"Coq au vin," said Hannibal, setting down the pot.

Cock? Oh lord. Will mock-laughed. "I'm not gonna pretend that I know that dish,"

"Meat braised with red wine, along with mushrooms, pork fat, carrots, onions, and garlic…"

"Smells heavenly," Will blurted out, surprisingly himself that he wanted to compliment Hannibal so eagerly. Was it validation that he was seeking? He pushed the thought aside for now. "Is it chicken?" Will asked.

“Yes.” Hannibal poured them wine. They both tasted it at the same time, eyes meeting for a moment too long. Will looked away, feeling naked under Hannibal’s gaze. But thankfully he had the meal to distract himself with. The chicken tasted more than delicious: he couldn’t come up better words to convey his gratitude. “Hannibal, this is delicious.” he said. He wondered if he had really, truly tasted a meal before Hannibal. Probably not, if he had to wonder. Most of his meals were usually hasty sandwiches, cereal, or over-cooked pasta. He made better food for his dogs than himself. Sometimes, when he really tried, he could make a good meal out of the fish that he hooked when he went fishing. But that was about it. He took another bite and closed his eyes, savouring the flavour, and also the fact that Hannibal had cooked it for him. Only for him, and no one else. When he opened his eyes, he saw that Hannibal was watching him with amusement, but not mockingly, but, if Will could say so, longingly.

“I take it your father never cooked?” Hannibal said, looking away to his meal.

“He did what he could do…which was not much.” Then: “Is this an extension to our appointment? Like a therapy session but with added benefits?”

“Something like that.” Hannibal smiled mischievously. What game was he playing?

“Did you lure me here with food? Were you that impatient to hear about my nightmare and couldn’t wait until next week?” Will caught himself, perhaps having spoken too much.

“If I give you the truthful answer, Will, I’m afraid you wouldn’t believe me.”

Will raised his brows, surprised at Hannibal’s honesty. “Tell me.” he replied.

Hannibal took a sip of his wine. “I was worried about you, simple as that. I thought perhaps it would be better if we talked sooner rather than later.”

Will faltered, then decided to fight honesty with honesty. “I don’t know how to feel about that,”

“Exactly,” replied Hannibal. How was it that Hannibal always seemed to know what was going on? As if to save Will from embarrassment,

Hannibal continued: “You think too much. Tell me what happened.”

Will placed his fork down for the moment. “I—” he began, stumbling to confide. “Saw *him*...”

“Garett Jacob Hobbs?”

“Yes…him and his voice…I didn’t think being in out the field would affect me this much…I just don’t understand why this is happening…”

“Are you afraid that things might become worse? Nightmares, they end the moment you wake up: there are no physical dangers to it. What do you think is worse than nightmares? What comes after nightmares, Will?”

Will exhaled. “I don’t know…”

“Forgive me, Will, but don’t you think that you might be bearing too much strain in your waking life? Dreams often reflect our lives, so it's understandable how extreme your nightmares are becoming.”

Will stayed silent, taken aback. Usually people treated him like he could handle anything—Jack, for instance. He had pushed Will to a point that Will didn’t know he had. A breaking point, almost. That was when the nightmares had become almost unbearable.

“I’ve never thought of the possibility of saying no to Jack…”

“So do you find that the crime scenes might be the cause?”

“I’m saying that they are—I’m admitting it.” It felt good to say it—however momentarily—out loud. Now he had to figure out what he was going to do—or not do—about his situation.

“When Jack will come calling, do you think you can refuse him?”

Will took emptied his glass. “I don’t know…I guess I’ll have to see,”

Hannibal looked at Will, feeling that he was losing Will, now that eye-contact was becoming difficult. “In the meantime, perhaps we can think of an outlet for you. Everyone needs something, something that’s good for them. What do you think helps? What do you think is good for you?”

Will considered the question, but the answer was obvious. Nevertheless, he felt the need to say it out loud: “You.” He lifted his eyes to

Hannibal, slowly. It was definitely not an appropriate thing to say to his psychiatrist.

Hannibal smiled, slightly, and then it was gone. “Am I a good psychiatrist then?” Will didn’t show it, but he was taken aback. Was he being patient-zoned? But then Hannibal continued: “Believe it or not, Will, I enjoy your company. More than you think.” Hannibal’s hand moved slightly on the table, for a second making Will think that Hannibal was going to reach for his hand. But he was only reaching for the stem of his wine glass. “And, you’re more than a patient.” Hannibal’s eyes lingered all over Will’s face. Hannibal looked beautiful: the shadows under his strong brow-bones; the way his hair fell over his forehead, the curves of his lips. His eyes glinting tenderly, not the way they usually looked.

Will felt uneasy, again. Where was this going? He thought about feigning a phone-call and escaping. Hannibal paused as if sensing panic. He stood up and placed a hand on Will’s shoulder: barely a second, but a second too long. “Dessert,” he said, as if to give Will some time alone. “Wait here.”

By the time Hannibal came back with the Orange Soufflé, Will had vanished.

For the short amount of time it took to bolt to his car, Will was convinced Hannibal would catch him, chase him down and drag him back to his dinner table. Before he could change his mind about his behaviour, he stepped on the pedal and drove home recklessly, all the time

fearing a call from Hannibal. But even after he had reached home, his phone remained silent: despite himself, he felt his heart drop. Didn't Hannibal care enough about him to ask what had gone wrong?

Will tried to keep busy: he occupied himself with doling out snacks to the dogs—taking his time, petting them, and finding it therapeutic. Again, now that he was calm, he realised how he had acted had been rude—more than rude. But why had he done it? What was this power that Hannibal had over him—or was it simply that he was going insane?

The phone rang: Will jolted as did the dogs. Will watched it ring as the dogs watched Will, until finally it stopped ringing. He suddenly felt cold towards Hannibal—for making him act this way, for making him have these conflicting feelings. He got up in a disassociated stupor, and began going through lecture notes for the next day. Tonight, he knew the nightmares would run rampant.

Chapter 3

Chapter Summary

Will decides that he must avoid Hannibal to keep from falling for him more...but fails.

Will zoomed through another lecture, surprisingly sharp and determined now that he knew how he was going to act towards Dr. Lecter from now on: indifferent, and professional. They weren't meant to be friends—or more than friends—because that wasn't what was appropriate for a psychiatrist and his patient. And no first names. Still, as he spoke to his students, he felt a part of him wanting to cling to the thought of Dr. Lecter: how good it would feel to give in to Dr. Lecter and let himself be comforted…to be understood.

No—he pushed the thought aside and readjusted his mask of a face. He hadn't gotten much sleep but ironically the deprivation made him wittier. The students seemed to sense something different in him too: they responded to him with more zeal, eager to eat from his hand. They were attentive, and when he was able to look into their faces, he saw admiration.

Once the class was over and last of the students gone away, he slumped down into his chair and exhaled, taking off his glasses and pinching the bridge of his nose. He composed himself quickly and began preparing another presentation for his next class—which was in an hour—when he heard darting footsteps. It was unmistakable. It could only belong to Jack Crawford, in all his confidence. "Will," came the voice, "I need you,"

Will exhaled, and answered accordingly, feeling a little brave: "Really Jack? You've got more people than you need,"

Jack pierced him with an icy glance. "Do I have to repeat myself?"

"Alright," said Will, getting up and straining from rolling his eyes.

Will walked alongside Jack—they seemed to be heading to the lab. When they arrived, Will saw Dr. Lecter standing amongst the team, coat flung over one arm, looking impeccably handsome, and composed, except for a slight glint of worry that showed in his eyes when they landed on Will. Will stopped breathing for a few seconds. He felt like fainting—almost.

"Will," said Beverly, always ready to speak her mind. Sometimes it was refreshing—because she always told the truth, however hurtful—but other times it was too much for Will to handle.

"You okay, Will?" continued Beverly. "You look a little feverish."

Will ran a hand over his face. He could see Dr. Lecter turning to look at him. *He* would know if Will really had a fever: Dr. Lecter had once been a medical doctor.

“Yeah,” Will answered. He was *blushing*, he realised. How embarrassing.

“Will, take some aspirin.” said Jack impatiently. He seemed to be in a bad mood. “Now that we’re all here, take a look at this.”

Will manoeuvred himself so he could stand farthest from Dr. Lecter; the others—Zeller and Jimmy Price included—crowded around the displayed bodies of Mr. and Mrs. Anderson on their tables.

The team had dubbed the killer “Angel-Maker”: both the victims had their backs cut down the middle, each side peeled back in large flaps, suspended in the air by fishing lines with hooks so that they resembled wings. They were in a kneeling position, wrists tied in front of them, as if in prayer. Jack was the first to speak up: “So what are we thinking? Why are they praying?”

Will kept his eyes down, then closed them in concentration. It took more than a few seconds to come up with the answer but it was obvious: “He’s afraid,” he said.

Will felt everyone turn to look at him. Would there ever come a day when he would get used to their scrutiny?

Beverly: “What is somebody who could do something like this afraid of?”

For Will, the answer was as clear as day: “He’s dying.” Jack looked at him with smug eyes that said: “This is why I need you.”

Will continued: “What was in his vomit?”

The conclusion reached was that the killer had a brain tumour.

“He’s afraid of dying in his sleep. He makes angels to watch over him.”

A chill passed through the room as if everybody had collectively sighed.

*

Will turned to go back to his class when Jack called him back. “Need to talk to you for a minute in my office.” Will nodded, thankful for the opportunity to avoid Dr. Lecter following him to his class.

Jack turned to Dr. Lecter and firmly shook his hand, thanking him and bidding him goodbye. Will looked down as Dr. Lecter left the lab. Then Jack turned to him, as if ready to shout at him. But he restrained himself and nodded to the direction of his office.

“Now what the hell is going on here?” asked Jack once they were seated. It was a puzzling question, to say the least. Will stayed silent, waiting for elaboration.

Jack: “You know why Dr. Lecter was in the lab with us today?”

Will didn’t like where this was going. “No.” He tried his best to stay unfamiliar.

“Dr. Lecter rarely joins us in the lab. Why do you think he was there?”

“I don’t know, Jack, I have a class in thirty min—”

“Because he asked me to,” Jack interrupted, voice a little louder. “He insisted. He came here to confront me about your well-being.”

Will was speechless. “So…he was there to observe me today?”

“The point is that if you don’t tell me you’re not feeling well then you need to tell me, okay?”

Will stood up. “I’ll try,” he answered.

*

Will walked swiftly through the halls. He was done with how his day was turning out. All he wanted now was to go home to his dogs and fall asleep, preferably without dreams or nightmares.

“Will,” came the unmistakable voice. Will stopped in his tracks, too late to pretend that he hadn’t heard Dr. Lecter calling. He turned around slowly, watching as Dr. Lecter drew closer. So, Dr. Lecter had been waiting for him. “Dr. Lecter, I have a lecture to give—” he began, but was interrupted.

“I’m starting to think that you’re avoiding me, Will.” said Dr. Lecter. He looked up and down at Will, as if to savour the sight of him.

Will scoffed. “Whatever gave you that idea?” he replied, knowing that he was becoming rude again, but somehow unable to stop. Then, to retrace his steps: “Have I offended you?”

Dr. Lecter looked away as if in hurt. “You know very well that you have the power to more than offend me.” Will stayed silent. He wasn’t liking where this was going. He was supposed to shut Dr. Lecter out. “Tell me, Will, what happened yesterday night?”

Will considered, still unable to look Dr. Lecter in the eye.

“Or shall we talk about it over dinner?”

“I don’t think I can make it,” answered Will, absent-mindedly.

“We’ll have to talk about it eventually,” Dr. Lecter said. He slowly reached out a hand—as if giving Will a chance to step away—and placed it underneath Will’s chin, lifting it so Will would be forced to meet his eyes. Will let it happen: it felt good to be coddled. “After all, you’re my patient.” The corners of Dr. Lecter’s lips arched.

*

That night Will drove home in a feverish stupor—perhaps under the spell of someone… someone who was also his psychiatrist. The more he tried not to think of Dr. Lecter, the more impossible it became.

After dinner, he tried to keep busy by taking a walk with his dogs, hoping to tire out both the mind and the body, so he could at least pass out from sheer exhaustion. But his efforts proved fruitless: he tossed and turned, then picked up a book. The night transformed into midnight. The words on the page began to blur and lose meaning. He closed his eyes again, hoping to take a chance with luck. He wondered if Dr. Lecter's offer for help was still standing, but to call him now would be dangerous. What if Will said something he could never take back? The consequences would be dire. He looked over to his phone, and before he could stop himself, grabbed it and pressed it against his ear. He pretended that Dr. Lecter was on the phone, his voice clear and thick. He imagined the doctor in bed, hair ruffled, eyes heavy with sleep. What did he look like when he was asleep? Beautiful, Will was sure. Did Dr. Lecter wear clothes that revealed more of his skin than he showed during the day-time? Or did he sleep naked? Will felt himself suddenly out of breath, his hand reaching down between his legs. *No,* he thought. *If I do this I'm doomed.* Yet, he couldn't stop himself. The phone was still pressed against his ear, the fantasy coming alive when he started imagining Dr. Lecter talking to him, encouraging Will to touch himself, because that would help him fall asleep. "If I was there I would do it for you." Dr. Lecter would say. He imagined Dr. Lecter tracing his fingers alongside Will's waistband, and then reaching in. He imagined Dr. Lecter secretly touching himself too, betrayed by heavy breathing, and a sudden choked noise indicating that he had come. Before he knew it, Will came too, and opened his eyes, suddenly realising what he had done.

How was he ever going to face Dr. Lecter again?

Chapter 4

Chapter Summary

> Will is sleepwalking out in the road when Hannibal comes to the rescue and takes care of Will.

When Will opened his eyes again, he saw Dr. Lecter in front of him, his hands on Will's shoulders. Surely he was dreaming…

"Will?" The voice was suddenly clear, apparent in a way that Will realised he wasn't dreaming. This was reality. And the daunting reality was that he had been sleepwalking. "Hannibal?" he replied, forgetting that he wasn't supposed to call him that. Hannibal's hands slowly slid down Will's arms and supported him firmly by the elbows. "Where am I?" Will asked. He looked around: the sky seemed like it was teetering between midnight and early, early morning. "You're safe," replied Hannibal. "I'm here."

A sudden chill jolted him. He was barely dressed, and barefoot too. Hannibal reached out and placed a hand on Will's forehead to confirm his suspicions.

"Will, lean on me." Hannibal said gently. "Be careful, your feet." Will looked down and saw faint blotches of blood. He must have stepped on something sharp. He let himself be guided so that he could lean on Hannibal's car. Hannibal took off his coat and draped it over Will's shoulders. It was a welcoming warmth, and heavenly: it was the closest he would ever get to Hannibal. He let himself be lowered into the backseat, where a dog was waiting. "Winston?" Will was shocked. It really was Winston. He let the dog smother him, and then realised what he had done. Hannibal's coat was going to be covered in dog hair.

"Let me wrap your feet," said Hannibal, presenting a pristine handkerchief. It looked too luxurious to be gauze for injured feet. "I would only ruin it," said Will, before he could stop himself. Hannibal looked up, looking like he was at the cusp of speaking, but decided against it. Instead he ripped the handkerchief in half and extended his hands. Will obeyed. "How did you know he was mine?" Will asked about Winston, while Hannibal tied the cloth. "I figured he was yours. He smelled familiar." Will stayed silent. Did that mean that Hannibal smelled Winston on Will, or Will on Winston? What else did he smell on Will? Will had a lot of questions. Especially the question of why Hannibal had suddenly turned up in Wolf Trap.

*

It was a little past three in the morning when they finally arrived at Will's house. Surprisingly, the front door wasn't ajar. The dogs were safe. Hannibal swiftly got out of the car and appeared at Will's side to help. Will stood up carefully with Winston at his feet, clutching Hannibal's arm for support. And then he realised with dread that he had porch

stairs. Damn it. Hannibal, on the other hand, matter-of-factly scooped Will up in his arms as if he weighed nothing. “Hannibal—you don’t have to!” Will whispered shakily, blushing before he even realised. Too much was happening in one night. For the brief moment between the outside and the comfort of his bed, Will did guiltily savour the feeling of being so close to Hannibal. He felt himself trying to hold onto to this moment; imagined himself in the future trying to recall it.

The dogs greeted Hannibal with caution, whereas Hannibal slightly raised his brows in amusement. “Quiet a family you have, Will,” he said. “I knew you had a few but not seven.”

Then Hannibal disappeared, and returned with a leather bag that looked like it held medical supplies. “Give me a moment to fetch some hot water,” he said, and disappeared into the kitchen. Will worried about what was coming next. He sighed as he turned on the lamp, and felt a throb of headache with the sudden movement that he had just made. He picked up Buster and held him tightly, trying to bury the thoughts of what had just happened. He had been sleepwalking. He was a danger to himself. What was he gonna do?

Hannibal reappeared, with a bowl of steaming water and towels that he had managed to find. He kneeled on the floor and began untying the handkerchief. Will had known this was going to happen. He knew Hannibal was going to take care of him. He wanted Hannibal to take care of him. He reached out a hand and placed it over Hannibal’s. He didn’t want Hannibal thinking that he was taking this for granted. Hannibal looked up.

But what came out was not what he was thinking. “Hannibal, this is beneath you.”

Hannibal tilted his head, slightly. He thought for a moment, then answered: “I’d like to imagine that you’re letting me do this.” His hands worked, bathing the feet in water and soaping the wounds. Will looked down at Hannibal’s bared forearms, the sight of them so unfamiliar.

Will swallowed. His throat felt dry. “So…you want to do this?” Will asked.

Hannibal stopped for a second and ran a thumb over the skin. He had a cloth with disinfectant ready to be applied to the wounds. He looked like he didn’t want to hurt Will. “Yes,” he answered. Will jerked a little at the pain.

Finally, fresh gauze was presented and wrapped, the folds meticulous for such minor wounds.

Hannibal put away the soiled cloths and looked around. Half of the dogs were already sleeping again.

The silence was getting uncomfortable. Will spoke: “How…how did you end up finding me in the middle of nowhere? Did I call you?”

Hannibal looked up at Will. For how the night had turned out, he didn’t look tired. Just… uncertain. “No, you didn’t call. I was worried.”

“So you drove all the way to Wolf Trap?”

“I said I was worried.” He stood up and began clearing the mess. “Go to sleep, Will.” It sounded like an order. Will swung his legs up into his bed and laid down, head against cold pillow. Buster jumped down and obediently went back to his own bed. From the corner, Will could still see Winston looking at Will in worry.

Was Hannibal going to drive all the way back to Baltimore? He wanted Hannibal to stay, the words once again hovering over his tongue.

Hannibal was almost done cleaning now: Will felt the moment slipping away. Then Hannibal disappeared. For a moment Will thought he had left without saying goodbye, but he came back. With a glass of water. How thoughtful.

“Drink,” said Hannibal, kneeling and watching Will as he drank. When he had downed the whole glass, he knew his time was up. Hannibal would be gone. Will handed the glass back, but as soon as Hannibal turned to walk away, he called him back. “Please stay?” he asked, unable to meet Hannibal’s eyes. There was a moment of silence that was frightening, as if everything Will had ever believed in hung on this moment.

“Are you sure?” Hannibal asked, his voice low.

This time, Will was adamant. “Yes.” He lifted his eyes to Hannibal’s, and saw him nod once in reply.

*

“Are there any couches in the other rooms?” Hannibal asked, still dressed in his shirt and slacks, because he didn’t want to bother Will with where to find clothes to borrow.

“You’re staying here,” Will replied, suddenly confident. He patted the space next to him on his bed.

Hannibal seemed wary. “Haven’t I crossed enough boundaries?”

“Boundaries were crossed a long time ago.”

Hannibal walked over, turned the lamp off and carefully slid himself into Will’s bed. Will ruffled the sheets so it covered both of them. As nervous as he had been, having Hannibal by his side made him feel safe. The nearness of his body would certainly have been dangerous if Will wasn’t so unwell. Right now, he could blissfully pretend that Hannibal was there simply to protect him.

“Thank you for…taking care of me, Hannibal.” he whispered.

“We have a lot to talk about in the morning, Will.”

“I’m sure we do.” Will suddenly recalled that he had touched himself in this very bed earlier that night, thinking of Hannibal. Hopefully he had erased all evidence of his dirty deed. But before he could worry himself too much, he fell asleep wondering if he would get the chance to see Hannibal in slumber, beautiful in the morning light.

Chapter 5

Chapter Summary

Hannibal takes Will to the hospital and helps him get treatment.

Instead, Will woke up to an unusual sight: Dr. Hannibal Lecter, in his house, talking on the phone, with Zoe on his lap, who was receiving Hannibal's strokes as if they were better than Will's. The house smelled lovely: it smelled of breakfast. Harley barked, as if signalling to Hannibal that Will was finally awake. Hannibal looked over, with faint stubble present, and his hair less neater than Will was used to seeing. An unusual sight, but a welcome one. Will slowly sat up, as Hannibal ended his call and walked over to Will. "We're going to Noble Hills." He paused, still cradling Zoe in his arms. "But first, breakfast."

"Noble Hills?" He didn't know the place. "Was that Jack on the phone?" Will slung his legs out of bed but Hannibal motioned for him to stay put.

"We're visiting an old friend," Hannibal said, returning with a tray of breakfast things, displayed in Will's mismatched utensils. "I would've opted for something more nutritious but it seems you take better care of your dogs than you do yourself, Will." Will laughed, despite himself. He liked getting scolded for things like these. "Which friend is this?" Will asked, chewing perfectly toasted bread. "My dogs have taken a liking to you,"

Hannibal looked at his feet. Zoe and Ellie were looking up at him, trying to get picked up. "I think I'll take them out for a walk," he said, and left Will with his unanswered questions.

*

Hannibal drove, dodging questions like bullets. Who was this "old friend?" Will pulled the blanket Hannibal had given him tighter around him: he felt the fever returning. He reached into his pocket for another aspirin when Hannibal darted a glance at him. "Better not, Will." Will complied.

They drove all the way to Baltimore, finally arriving at a prestigious-looking building called Noble Hills Care Centre. Will got out of the car slowly, taking Hannibal's arm for support. "We're seeing a neurologist, Will, a Dr. Sutcliffe. He and I were residents together at John Hopkins."

Will had figured at this point that there was something wrong with him, and that Hannibal was extending his care as Will's psychiatrist (and friend), by taking him to a hospital, up-scale as it was.

“Did I make you cancel any appointments?” Will asked. “I’d hate to be the reason to disrupt your work,”

Hannibal held him tightly. “Don’t you worry about that,” The elevator doors opened. “This way, Will.”

“What do you think is wrong with me?” Will wasn’t exactly scared that he might have something wrong with him. What scared him more was the possibility of *not* having a something wrong with him. What if he was making all this up and the blame was simply to be laid on mental illness?

Hannibal stopped and looked at Will. “You’ll be fine, Will.”

*

Dr. Sutcliffe greeted Hannibal with an enthusiastic hand-shake, and then set his eyes on Will. He made a face as if to say “How do you know each other?” Did Will look that rugged and run-down next to Hannibal? It shouldn’t have bothered him so much, but the look somehow also seemed to say that Will wasn’t worthy of being next to Hannibal. The office was clean and decorated in the way that all doctor’s offices were: uneasy and suffocating; pristine and cold. Will wanted to get out; under different circumstances, he would’ve simply walked out.

Will answered Dr. Sutcliffe’s questions accordingly. He couldn’t figure out what Hannibal could have in common with Dr. Sutcliffe, except of the fact that they had worked together. Or was Will getting jealous over nothing? Was he taking things too personally?

“Any family history of brain disease?”
“How about accidents, head traumas?”
“Ever checked for concussion?”
“When did the headaches start?”
And on and on.

Hannibal stepped in: “He was sleepwalking in the early hours of the morning, out on the road.”

Dr. Sutcliffe was jotting down notes, when he looked up at Will, as if waiting for further elaboration. “You seem fairly composed. Are you…in somewhat of a denial that this happening?”

Will was flabbergasted. So often had people thought him okay just because he seemed like he was. Only Hannibal had seen through that. “It’s the questioning of reality that’s making me feel the way that I do,” Will said calmly, as if talking to himself.

“And how are you feeling?” asked Dr. Sutcliffe.

“Like…I might be dreaming. Like…I’m not even sure if I’m really here,”

Dr. Sutcliffe looked at Hannibal, his expression now changed to worry.

Will knew then that there was definitely something wrong with him.

*

Will stood opposite Dr. Sutcliffe, who handed him a paper hospital gown. They were going to slide him into the MRI to scan his brain. Will felt undeniably uncomfortable, but what kept him going was that Hannibal was insisting that he go through with it.

On the way to the MRI, Hannibal had stopped Will to console him, assuring him that he was going to be fine. “I don’t feel fine,” he had replied, defeated. Hannibal had looked defeated too, for a second looking like he was about to reach for Will’s face, but they had been interrupted.

The whir of the MRI was distressing; not that he was claustrophobic. He could imagine Hannibal and Dr. Sutcliffe discussing him behind the glass, picking him apart. He closed his eyes and waited for the moment when he would be able to see the comforting image of Hannibal again.

*

Dr. Sutcliffe presented Will with the results, as Hannibal observed Will. “The entire right side of your brain is inflamed. It’s Anti-NMDA receptor encephalitis. Symptoms are going to get a lot worse. Fortunately you don’t have a tumour.”

Will looked at Hannibal, thankful but frankly shocked. So it could be fixed. He wasn’t going insane, after all. “You’re lucky you have Hannibal, Mr. Graham,” said Dr. Sutcliffe. “He caught it just in time, before you could go on to have seizures.”

“So…I can be treated?”

“Yes, although…” Dr. Sutcliffe looked at Hannibal, who seemed to have updated Dr. Sutcliffe on what Will’s day-to-day looked like at the bureau. “You’ll have to be hospitalised immediately, which means of course that your workplace needs to be informed as soon as possible.”

“And how long is it going to take?”

“It really depends. A few days, weeks…months.”

“Oh, Jack is not going to like this,” said Will. Will himself wasn’t particularly thrilled about it either.

“I’ll help you make the call, Will.” said Hannibal. He looked worried. And to think the source of that worry was Will himself..

*

Dr. Sutcliffe had left them alone to discuss matters. There was also the matter of Will’s dogs, and who would take care of them. “You need not worry about that,” said Hannibal. “I will.”

“You’ve already done enough, maybe I’ll call somewhere they can stay—”

“Will,” said Hannibal, interrupting. “Let me.”

*

Hannibal had offered—no, insisted—to be the one to call Jack. And for the first time ever, he had sounded angry. Will felt something inside him break. How could someone get so worked up about him?

After a few minutes, Hannibal handed over his phone to Will. He looked like he had won an argument.

“Hello,” answered Will.

“How did I not know about this?” Jack said, his own disbelief barely contained.

“Well, this is me telling you about it.”

“You sound as if I would’ve refused to make you get help if you would’ve come to me sooner,”

Will was thankful for Jack, but still it didn’t make it any different. “Well, I got help in the form of…Dr. Lecter.” Hannibal looked up from the forms he had been helping Will fill. He seemed ready to have another go at Jack.

“I’m sorry, Will, for not seeing it sooner. I should’ve known, but then again, I’m not Dr. Lecter, who you seem to have gotten pretty close to,”

Was that a jab at Will for opening up to Hannibal instead of to Jack, or a jab at the fact that Will and Hannibal were getting too close to each other?

“Yeah,” said Will, feeling fed up now that the headache was growing stronger.

“I’m gonna come see you, and you better let me; I’m also gonna talk to Dr. Bloom for substituting your classes, okay?”

“Yeah, okay.” Hannibal stood up, as if he had decided that Will had had enough. “You wanna talk to Hannibal? I mean Dr. Lecter?” Will bit his lip.

Silence. “I…yeah, sure.”

“Bye, Jack.” He handed the phone back to Hannibal.

Chapter 6

Chapter Summary

Will gets hospitalised and gets visits from Hannibal (as well as Jack and Alana).

Will opened his eyes, finding himself in a strange place yet again. But this time, he was safe. He was sure of that, because Hannibal was present in the room beside him. Hannibal, it seemed, now represented safety and stability for Will. Two things he had never been sure he would ever have the chance of attaining. But there was one more thing that he had never been sure of too, and that was Hannibal, at his side.

Will had spent the past few days in a haze, obediently swallowing what was required of him, getting probed here and there with needles, or otherwise asleep with all the dozes of medication. In a way, he guessed he had been needing this rest; to step away from his life. The only downside was that he missed his dogs dearly. Hannibal had been visiting it seemed, as Dr. Sutcliffe had told Will. Though he hadn't remembered much.

As for Dr. Sutcliffe, Will had been wary about him. But surprisingly Will had discovered that Dr. Sutcliffe liked to spill information about Hannibal without Will's questioning. It felt a little intrusive to be talking about Hannibal in such ways, but nevertheless Will found himself hungry for more. "You know he smelled it on you, right?" said Dr. Sutcliffe. "Your encephalitis?"

Will titled his head in puzzlement.

"He has a…might I say, a dangerously sharp nose. Says when he was a boy he smelled stomach cancer on his teacher…just, remarkable."

Will was dumbfounded. That explained why Hannibal had known Winston was Will's.

Hannibal, now, had his head bent to his leather note-book, his fountain-pen sliding away. Will was arrested by his image: his hair fell over his eyes like it never usually did: Will wanted to lean over and caress it away. Will would have gazed on longer but Hannibal paused his writing, seemed to sense that Will was not asleep anymore, and then looked up. "You're awake,"

Will smiled, or tried to. It was embarrassing to think how unkempt he must have looked. Hannibal closed his book and laced his fingers together; the image suddenly sprung up memories of their appointments together. How long ago it all seemed now. "Do they let in visitors this late at night?" Will asked, fumbling for better things to say.

"I have my ways," Hannibal replied, smiling softly. "Any nightmares?"

Oh, so suddenly. “Are we resuming my therapy, Doctor?”

Hannibal leaned forward. “I only wanted to know how you are, Will.”

Will felt himself blush. He averted his gaze, pretending to look at the sky through the window. He was still in denial; he still wanted to stay in that safe area that labelled them as doctor and patient. Even though they already had slept in the same bed. But he knew now, they were more than that. “No nightmares.” He replied. “And how is Dr. Lecter?” He turned his face back to Hannibal.

Hannibal tilted his head, slightly. “That is not a question for now.”

“Why? Is there something wrong?”

“No,” he paused. “I simply wouldn’t want to bore you with such things,”

Will was perplexed. “It wouldn’t bore me,” he replied. “I want to know just as you wanted to know how I was.”

Hannibal nodded. He seemed to have shifted into his psychiatrist form. He brushed his wool trousers and pinched dog hair from the fabric. “I think Winston misses you the most,” he said. Rare for Hannibal to avoid a subject. “He’s the only one who tries to come home with me when I leave, maybe he thinks if he comes with me, he’ll get to see you.”

Will smiled. The image was adorable, Hannibal trying to console Winston. But—“Dr. Lecter, you’re avoiding my question.”

Hannibal looked back at Will, defeated. Perhaps he was trying to think of a fabricated truth to tell. Was honesty so difficult all of a sudden? Or was it that if Hannibal were to be honest, he would say things he couldn’t take back, ever?

“Do you call me Dr. Lecter intentionally so you can put me in my place? Keep me in check?”

Will frowned. This was not how he had imagined the conversation to go. “I noticed you returned to calling me Dr. Lecter after that night you…ran away from my dinner table,” Hannibal said. “And we never got to discuss why you acted the way that you did.”

Hannibal had him cornered. This won’t do. “Is it too late to cancel my therapy appointment Dr. Lecter?”

“Avoiding questions, Will?”

“You’re avoiding questions, Dr. Lecter.”

“Aren’t you to a certain degree required to answer my questions? As I am your psychiatrist,”

“So you’re saying that as my psychiatrist you’re not obligated to answer *my* questions?”

“Perhaps,”

Will closed his eyes. He felt mentally drained, all of a sudden. And all he had wanted was to know how Hannibal was. “I think I’m tired now, Dr. Lecter.” He turned on his side so he could look away from Hannibal. When he woke next, Hannibal was gone.

*

The next day Jack visited. Will wasn’t sure if he was surprised or not. He guessed what he was feeling was uncertainty about his future, his future that was always on a whim in Jack’s hands.

Jack brought a bouquet of white orchids, but it was obvious it wasn’t from him. It screamed Mrs. Crawford and her elegance. A sort of apology for the way Jack was.

“Will,” began Jack, already fidgety as if desperate to return to the bureau. “How can I begin?”

Will shrugged. “Don’t, Jack. It’s…I’m fine,”

Jack sort of rolled his eyes. “That…sounds far from the truth, Will.”

“I’ll get through it, and then you can haggle me all you want.”

“Ah—yes. I do admit I have been rather hard on you…I was almost going to ask you to look at some pictures but Dr. Lecter has strictly forbidden me.” Jack shook his head. “He cares about you a lot, Will.”

Will nodded. He tried to picture Hannibal scolding Jack.

“The team sends their regards, too. Beverly was gonna visit today but she got caught up in something. She asked me to give you this, though.” Jack rummaged in his breast pocket and presented a card. The front showed a kitten asleep on a pillow with what seemed like wet cloth on its head, as if it had fever. Above were the words “Get Well Soon!” written in childish font. Will opened the card to see scribbles from Beverly, Zeller and Jimmy, telling Will to come save the team so they could get some sleep. Unexpectedly, Will felt moved. He honestly hadn’t expected this from them. And maybe that said something about him more than it did about them.

*

A week had passed: Dr. Sutcliffe was positive Will was on the way to make a good recovery. Hannibal was in the room with Dr. Sutcliffe, catching up, talking in medical jargon which was rather too advanced for Will. He only wished Dr. Sutcliffe would fuck off so he could have Hannibal to himself. How disrespectful, but true. The heart wanted what it wanted.

“I’ll leave you to your visit then, Hannibal.” said Dr. Sutcliffe, and nodded at Will on his way out.

As smitten as he was, Will was also feeling agitated, for obvious reasons, and more: more being the fact that he had way too much time to ruminate about why Hannibal was doing

what he was doing for Will. Why had his care extended to the point that Will had ended up here, and was also getting to have visits from Hannibal.

Why, was Hannibal going out of his way to ease Will's boredom by bringing books and whatnot; why was he offering to take care of the dogs.

Hannibal approached Will, smiling softly. "Hello, Will."

Will nodded, making sure not to smile. After their last visit, his feelings towards Hannibal were turning ambiguous (not that he didn't want Hannibal to be around; instead, he was finding it difficult to assess whether Hannibal wanted to be around him). He wanted to see how Hannibal would react, so Will would know how to react. "Dr. Lecter."

Hannibal paused, tilting his head slightly. So it was Dr. Lecter again. He took a seat and assumed his psychiatrist pose: hands laced together, legs crossed, posture straight. Hannibal was wearing a dark grey suit, with striking maroon checks on them. Will wondered what it would feel like to melt into Hannibal's arms.

"Something is bothering you." Hannibal said. It wasn't a question.

"Everything seems bother me nowadays, glad you noticed, though." Will replied. He knew he was acting like a brat, but he couldn't help it. He wanted to rile Hannibal up, crush his unbreakable facade.

Hannibal remained as he was, perhaps slightly amused. "Tell me."

Will stayed silent for a long time, feeling Hannibal's eyes observe him, and liking being looked at. "I was wondering why you are doing this," he said finally, in barely a whisper.

Hannibal leaned forward, trying to catch Will's eye. What he said next he said plainly, much to Will's astonishment. "Because I care for you."

Will finally looked at Hannibal, brows furrowed. He knew Hannibal cared for him: he wouldn't be here if it wasn't for Hannibal's care. Will wanted to know *why* Hannibal cared for him. "I like you, Will, and enjoy your company." Suddenly it was hard to be in the same room with Hannibal. *Like?* What did that mean?

Hannibal continued: "Is it so hard to accept that someone might like you, for who you are—just the way you are?"

Will hesitated, clearly uncomfortable. He tried to deflect: "I don't know if I'm qualified enough for someone to *like* me. I don't know what that looks like. And I have a feeling they won't like me after a certain period of time. I don't even like myself,"

"All humans have redeeming qualities to them, just as they have…un-redeeming qualities. Why don't you like yourself?"

"I don't think I'm in the mood to be psycho-analysed…"

"Yet here you are, allowing this conversation to take place."

Will faltered, struck silent. Hannibal was right: all he had to do was ask Hannibal to go away.

“All these words, Will, just to distract yourself from my confession that I enjoy your company?” One corner of Hannibal’s mouth lifted in a flicker of a smile. Will looked away. Suddenly, a loud knocking shook the room. The door was opened. “Sorry it took me so long to visit,” It was

Dr. Alana Bloom. “And sorry for knocking so loudly.” Then she noticed Hannibal. “Hannibal! What a surprise!” Hannibal stood up, smiling at Alana. They seemed to be really close, Will noticed. Of course, they had known each other from before, but…Will noticed he was getting jealous when nothing had even happened yet. Alana approached Will and set down a large bouquet of flowers, too bright for the room. “Your students miss you, Will.” she said. Her smile was too precious for this world. “They keep hounding me, asking me where you’re staying, if they can come visit and give presents…” Will was surprised, but he found the idea of one his students sneaking in here unpleasant. Lucky he had Hannibal to protect him.

Alana leaned closer and put her hand on Will’s. They were cold from being outside, so Will clasped both of his on top of hers to warm them. “I’ve had a good talk…I mean I’ve…given Jack a good scolding for how things have turned out,” she said. From the corner of his eye, Will saw Hannibal staring at Will’s hands, clasping Alana’s. Was he jealous? Will answered, consciously stringing out his words so Hannibal could hear: “I like how you rattle Jack. He respects you too much to yell at you no matter how much he wants to.”

Alana smiled. “And I take advantage of that.” She turned to look at Hannibal. “Of course, Hannibal also has taken to rattling Jack.” Hannibal smiled, though Will could see something bitter hiding just underneath. Will hoped he hadn’t gone too far.

*

Will was getting worried about Hannibal not showing up. It had been four days since his last visit. Was these the consequences of his actions? Had he indeed gone too far? He walked around the ward, dragging along his IV stand behind him, when his heart leapt up at the sound of familiar footsteps. Hannibal’s. Will turned around to see Hannibal ascending the stairs. Again, each time he saw Hannibal, he felt weak; and a distant sense of danger, as if he might be found out; as if he had done something bad. Hannibal noticed Will, and stopped in his tracks, as if to take in the sight of Will. Will knew he looked like shit but of course Hannibal would never say so.

“Will,” Hannibal said as he approached. “You’re walking. Feeling better?”

“Yeah,” Will replied. For a second he considered apologising for the way that he had acted but that would mean admitting that Will had intended to make Hannibal jealous. He bit his lip in nervousness instead.

Hannibal inclined his head towards the lounge area, his hand touching Will in the small of his back for a split second. Will felt electrified at the thought of Hannibal’s hands touching him there for longer.

They sat down on one of the couches, side by side, like old friends. “I have brought you something,” said Hannibal, presenting a Tupperware and cracking the lid open. “You must be getting tired of hospital food.”

Hannibal had baked fucking brownies. “Remember last week you said you were craving brownies?” Hannibal smiled, offering a piece as if in truce for how they had been acting towards one another other.

Will didn’t remember at all. “Did I?” he replied, and took a big bite, not caring how he looked. It was still warm. “Mmm,” he said, loud enough to embarrass himself. “I feel like I’m in heaven,”

Hannibal smiled, taking a modest bite out of his own piece. He poured hot coffee for them from a thermos, which was also heavenly because it was strong, unlike what the hospital provided. The aroma of coffee circled around them as Will took another piece. For the first time in weeks, Will felt peaceful.

“Dr. Sutcliffe has been keeping track of your illness,” said Hannibal. “He thinks you’ll be able to leave in less than a week.”

Will stopped chewing, and nodded.

“How do you feel about that?” Hannibal asked.

“Afraid I might not know how to function,” answered Will. He hadn’t planned to be so brutally honest.

“Remember Will, no matter what, I’ll be with you. No need to worry.”

Will smiled, and nodded.

Chapter 7

Chapter Summary

> Will gets discharged from hospital..Hannibal takes him home and bakes pumpkin pie for him cuz Hannibal is secretly feelin the halloween spirit.

The process of getting himself discharged from hospitalisation had suddenly arrived, three weeks in. Will found himself surprisingly anxious at the aspect of having to be out and about in the world again, and Hannibal seemed to notice that. “Don’t worry, I’m here.” Will turned his head to look at Hannibal, no longer feeling defensive, and instead nodded in gratitude. He stepped into Hannibal’s car absent-mindedly, dazed and contemplative about having to return to the bureau. It wasn’t that he didn’t want to, it was just that he wasn’t altogether sure if Jack would be changing his ways. At least he would get to see his dogs now.

“Will?” said Hannibal, and when Will didn’t respond, Hannibal leaned over and strapped Will’s belt in. Hannibal’s face had gotten close enough to smell Will: he wondered what he smelled of now that he was labeled healthy. “Thanks,” he replied.

Halfway through to Wolf Trap, Hannibal spoke: “I’ve informed Jack of your discharge, and arranged for you to go to the bureau in three days. Of course, you won’t teach until you’re completely caught up and comfortable. Is that okay? I can ask for more time off if three days aren’t enough—”

“Yes,” interrupted Will. “Thank you, Hannibal.”

“My pleasure.”

*

When they arrived, Will got out of the car too quickly and stumbled from dizziness. But Hannibal was there to help him. Hannibal was always going to be there for him from now on, Will thought. Now he was getting worried about Hannibal *not* being there. “Slowly, Will.” Hannibal slung an arm around Will’s waist and helped him up the steps; his touch, though welcome, was not something Will had gotten used to yet. At least in the meantime they could pretend that Hannibal was merely touching him as a precaution and nothing else.

Hannibal stepped forward and unlocked the door; Will had forgotten he had handed the keys to Hannibal.

The dogs were going to bombard Will as soon as the door was opened, so Hannibal opened it just a peak, threw a treat in to distract them, and then guided Will inside. The dogs were more than happy when they finally diverted their attention to Will, smothering him with kisses,

until Will laid down flat on the floor in an attempt to hug them all at once. “I missed you guys so much,” he muffled against their fur. Hannibal watched with a smile, bending down and petting Zoe, who had seemed to notice Hannibal standing alone; before disappearing to make a hot beverage for them. About five minutes into their frenzied reunion, Will stood up, noticing a sweet, cinnamon smell coming for the kitchen. What was Hannibal up to now?

“Hey,” Will entered the kitchen, surprised at what he saw. Hannibal was pouring fresh frosting on top of what looked like some kind of pound cake. “Will,” replied Hannibal, momentarily looking up.

“Hannibal, you didn’t have to…”

“But I wanted to,” came the reply. “Sit down, Will. Gather the dogs.”

Will sat himself down on his dining table, trailing the dogs behind him. Hannibal appeared with a tray of beautiful presentation; Will had never seen these utensils before, he guessed Hannibal had brought them with him. “Pumpkin cake, with cream-cheese frosting and Darjeeling Tea.” he said. “And for the dogs,” he set down a glass jar of bone shaped dog treats. Will picked one up and smelled it. “Pumpkin too?” he asked.

“And peanut butter.” Hannibal smiled, taking a seat.

“Oh, they are gonna go crazy,” Will tossed one to the nearest dog, Max, as the others sniffed at Will’s hand, asking for their portion. He gave each one of them their treats before turning to his cake. “Hannibal, how can I ever thank you…” he began, slightly uncomfortable. “Eat, Will.” Hannibal said. Will grabbed his fork and sunk into the cake, which came away moist and utterly appetising. It was beyond what he had imagined. Will closed his eyes and smiled. “Hannibal,” he managed to speak. “This is delicious.” Will paused: Hannibal had done so much for him. "Do you do this for all your friends?" he joked.

Hannibal smiled, setting down his fork. "Only for you, Will."

They ate in silence, now and then tossing treats to the dogs. Hannibal got up to pour water for the dogs, and Will watched him, his gaze undeniably smitten. It was a pleasant atmosphere, of not having to speak or act a certain way, but just be comfortable in each other’s presence.

*

The next day Will spent lazying around with his dogs, taking them on walks, trying not to think of Hannibal. Now that his mind was clear, he knew that he wanted to pursue Hannibal romantically, but he also knew that that was completely absurd, yet he couldn’t shake the feeling. But what had he to lose? Was he going to lose his job for getting involved with his psychiatrist? Was Hannibal going to have a bad reputation for getting involved with his patient? What would Jack say? What would Alana say? Could Will take the jabs he knew Beverly was going to make at him? And it wasn’t like Hannibal had done something to indicate that he was *not* interested in Will. What they were doing was beyond friendship now, that was clear.

Will picked up the phone and dialled Hannibal. It was after 7 pm, so he guessed it was safe to call.

“Hello, Will.”

“Hannibal—” Again words failed him. What was he supposed to say? *I miss you? I wanna see you?*

“I’d like to resume my therapy…can I make an appointment tomorrow?” Was it too soon? Was he going to suffocate Hannibal? But Hannibal wasn’t the type to indulge people if he didn’t want to. If it too much, surely he would say so, or make an excuse?

A pause. Then: “You may.”

Chapter 8

Chapter Summary

Will arrives for his therapy appointment and...ends up confessing his feelings for Hannibal.
(They kiss and...more than kiss)

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Will arrived at Hannibal's residence, the wine bottle that he had abandoned in his car weeks ago in hand.

"This is the least that I can do," Will said, handing over the bottle; his voice wavering.

"You shouldn't have, but I'm thankful." Hannibal said. "Will you be staying for dinner?"

Will hadn't expected it, but he found the idea enticing. More time with Hannibal. "Yes."

"I hope you won't run away again, Will." Hannibal said, looking back playfully.

"What are you gonna do? Handcuff me?"

Hannibal stopped in his tracks and considered Will's face for a second. "Are you trying to give me ideas, Will?"

Will blushed. He was embarrassed, but the image was undeniably arousing.

*

"Weird to be back here again," said Will, looking around Hannibal's office.

"You cannot imagine how happy I am for your recovery, Will." said Hannibal. "A cause for celebration." His smile was more at ease now; less strained, as it had been for the last few of weeks. "Champagne?"

Will nodded, thankful for the offer. Anything to take the edge off. Anything to distract from the fact that he wanted to pounce on Hannibal. Hannibal disappeared into his pantry, his fading image raising even more longing in Will. He sighed and ran his hand along the surface of one of the wooden ladders that led to the book-shelves. He looked around and realised that he had missed this place, no matter how intimidating it seemed at times. He had missed it because it was an extension of Hannibal. It was Hannibal in un-living form; and yet these

objects had a life of their own: Hannibal had breathed life into them. They lived because Hannibal lived with them.

Hannibal reappeared, a bottle of champagne dunked in an ice bucket in hand. He set it down and approached his liquor cabinet, presenting two champagne glasses. Had Hannibal planned this? Will smiled.

“Trying to get me drunk, doctor?” Will joked. When Hannibal looked up to meet his eyes, he felt an unease at maintaining eye-contact. Will felt himself shudder. He *was* in love with Hannibal. How could Hannibal not see?

“What shall we toast to, Will?” Hannibal asked, popping the bottle delicately. Only Hannibal could do such a thing, whereas Will would have spilled half the contents of the bottle on the floor.

“To…confessions.” Will was surprised those words had come out of his mouth.

Hannibal paused, trying to work out the meaning. He handed Will his glass, the golden liquid popping loudly. “Do you want to confess to something, Will?”

“You know what I’m talking about.” He was getting reckless. He drew nearer to Hannibal, clinked their glasses and downed the champagne in one go, handing it back to Hannibal. “Drink, please.” He said to Hannibal, who sipped his own glass slowly, regarding Will with eyes that seemed to see through him. Will painfully kept his eyes from straying. This was the moment of truth, as they say, he thought. But this time, Hannibal was the one to break eye-contact. He stooped for the bottle to re-fill their glasses; Will took advantage of this moment and regarded Hannibal, still unable to look away. Such poise, and such…rigidness to his movements. As if he was performing. Suppose Hannibal was stripped of his suit, the suits that made him functional and presentable to others. Will wanted to see Hannibal, naked, in all his beauty.

And much like a deadly intrusive thought that he could not control, Will found himself inching towards Hannibal before he knew it. Hannibal was alert enough to sense Will approaching. “Will?” he asked, softly; straightening up to look at Will. However how many times Will had imagined their first kiss, he hadn’t imagined it to be so sudden. He took hold of Hannibal’s face with both hands and kissed him hard. It was violent behaviour, but somehow Will tasted a kind of relief behind the shock in Hannibal’s lips. Hannibal reciprocated immediately, leaning forward and deepening the kiss.

After a moment, Will broke the kiss; they looked at each other, all pretences fallen away. Will could feel himself burning up, sensing stirring in between his legs. He could feel it in Hannibal too. He traced his hand from Hannibal’s face down to his neck, and then to the chest. Hannibal made as if to set the glasses down, but Will stopped him. “No,” he said. “I want both your hands occupied.” Hannibal barely nodded; he looked like he would let Will do anything he wanted. Without breaking eye-contact, Will aggressively fumbled with Hannibal’s pants—some wool material with intricate opening—then stuck his hand in, firmly taking hold of Hannibal’s erection. Hannibal sighed, his eyes glassy, and made as if to touch Will. “May I set these down?” he asked, barely audible. Will tightened his hold around the head, rubbing at the wet tip with his thumb. Hannibal gulped and then asked: “You would

deny me to touch you?" Will drew closer to Hannibal's face until their lips touched in a delicate kiss. "No talking." said Will, and then dropped to his knees. He pulled down Hannibal's pants, and took him in his mouth eagerly. He had been wanting to do this for so long. He looked up at Hannibal, his mouth open in pleasure, brows raised helplessly. For a second Will considered taking mercy on Hannibal—but, no. This was a sort of punishment for all the tortured days Will had spent when they had pretended to be colleagues, friends, whatever. Who knew he would be kneeling on the same floor he had been having therapy sessions on?

Will worked his mouth tighter, until Hannibal came without warning, spurting all over Will's face. "You could've warned me," Will said, wiping at his face with the back of a hand.

"You said no talking," replied Hannibal, a mischievous smile playing at his lips. A drop of condensation dripped to the floor from the champagne glass Hannibal was still holding.

*

Will returned to Hannibal's office, having had cleaned himself in the restroom.

Hannibal was waiting patiently with arms crossed, leaning on the edge of his desk. Will approached and sat down on the desk next to Hannibal. "Is this the part where we discuss what has happened?" Will asked.

"It can be, if you want." Hannibal uncrossed his arms and inched his hand closer to Will's on the desk, until his fingers overlapped Will's. They stared at their hands as if this had been the most intimate they had ever been. Will spoke: "I could never figure out if you…" he trailed off. What was he supposed to say? "If you saw me that way, or that you could see that I… liked you." It was hard to admit, but he felt better now that the truth had been unburdened.

Hannibal laughed softly. He took Will's hand in both of his and caressed them. "All the things that I have done for you, Will. I was afraid my obsession of you was quite apparent… but only you could be so blind to such a thing," he said. "I don't know how much longer I could have gone on without touching you." Hannibal smiled, standing up and facing Will, putting both hands on the sides of Will's face. "Which, you have yet to let me do properly." Will blushed, but this time, it was alright. His mind crowded with images of what they would do to each other from that day on. He spoke without thinking: "I'm yours to do as you please, Hannibal." Hannibal smiled, leaning his face forward for a kiss. It was just as magical as the first one; only this time, there was no hesitation. The longer they kissed, the hungrier they became. Will pulled Hannibal closer so that Hannibal stood in between his thighs, grinding to make his erection apparent. Hannibal broke the kiss, as if to gloat on what he had done.

"Remember when I said I didn't find you that interesting?" asked Will, cheeks aflame.

Hannibal smiled, his eyes loving, recalling the past. "Of course."

"Well, I lied."

"I know." Hannibal replied. He glanced at Will's lips and then leant in for a kiss.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you for reading and suffering with me.
Love you Fannibals and dont forget to eat the rude.
(I'm sorry if you were expecting more zest.. I realised I wanted this fic to be sweet and full of yearning rather than steamy)

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